



INSIDE FNU

Women of Impact



FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba
Photo Credit : Fiji Government



Associate Dean Learning and Teaching at the College Dr Lavinia Tiko
Photo Credit : Penioni Kolinisau

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FNU Academics Appointed to National Commissions

BY SELITA BOLANAVANUA & CHRISTAL KAPOOR

As Fiji observes Women's History Month and recognises the growing leadership of women across sectors, two distinguished academics from the Fiji National University (FNU) have been appointed to key national commissions tasked with shaping the country's constitutional and educational future. FNU Vice-Chancellor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba has been appointed as a Commissioner to the Fiji Constitution Review Commission, a seven-member national body mandated to lead an inclusive review of Fiji's 2013 Constitution. At the same time, Associate Professor Lavinia Tiko,

Associate Dean Learning and Teaching at the College of Humanities, Education and Law, has been appointed to serve on the Fiji Education Commission, which is undertaking a comprehensive review of the country's education system. Together, their appointments highlight the important role women scholars and leaders continue to play in shaping national dialogue, policy development, and institutional reform. Professor Nabobo-Baba described her appointment as both an honour and a responsibility. "I was deeply honoured and blessed to be commissioned by His Excellency *continued on page 2*



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From Page 1 the President, Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, as one of seven members of the Constitution Review Commission,” she said.

“I remain committed to serving our nation through education and leadership, while contributing to national development. This appointment is both a privilege and a responsibility to support the strengthening of our Constitution for the future of Fiji.”

Her appointment was formalised during a swearing-in ceremony at the State House officiated by President Lalabalavu.

The Constitution Review Commission has been mandated to gather submissions from Fijians across all divisions and recommend constitutional reforms that reflect the aspirations of the nation. The Commission is expected to submit its final report by 31 August 2026, marking a significant step in Fiji’s ongoing democratic evolution.

Professor Nabobo-Baba’s participation in the Commission brings an important perspective grounded in Pacific epistemologies, equity, and culturally informed governance principles. An internationally recognised scholar of education, Indigenous knowledge systems, and development, she brings more than 40 years of academic leadership and research experience to the role.

Her career has spanned regional and international institutions, and she has long been an advocate for Pacific-led research, education reform, and policy development. Through her work, she has consistently championed the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems into development frameworks and governance processes.

Meanwhile, Associate Professor Dr Tiko’s appointment to the Fiji Education Commission reflects her extensive experience in education policy, research, and system reform.

The Commission is tasked with conducting a comprehensive national review of Fiji’s education system, covering the full continuum from Early Childhood Education to tertiary and lifelong learning.

Dr Tiko is recognised as an education specialist and is the only Fijian Early Childhood Education Development and Primary education specialist on the Commission.

Her expertise spans curriculum design, assessment, policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, and broader education system transformation.

Her work is firmly grounded in Indigenous and Pacific knowledge systems, ensuring that proposed reforms remain culturally responsive and aligned with the lived realities of Fijian learners, teachers, and communities.

Beyond education reform, Dr Tiko’s work also engages with several cross-cutting national priorities, including climate justice, food security, gender equity, and social protection. These issues increasingly influence how education systems must adapt to prepare learners for complex social, economic, and environmental challenges. Through her contribution, the Education Commission is well positioned to strengthen the entire education continuum and help shape a future-focused system that enhances access, equity, and learning outcomes for all Fijians.

FNU congratulates both Professor Nabobo-Baba and Associate Professor Dr Tiko on their significant national appointments.

As Women’s Month highlights the achievements and leadership of women across the country, the appointments of Professor Nabobo-Baba and Dr Tiko stand as powerful reminders of the role women leaders play in shaping national policy, strengthening institutions, and guiding Fiji toward a more inclusive and resilient future.

The University stands ready to support their work as they contribute their expertise, leadership, and knowledge to national processes that will influence Fiji’s development for generations to come.

Maritime Career Brings Risks and Rewards



John Patterson Lema at the Fiji National University’s Pacific Centre for Maritime Studies
Photo Credit : Talei Baseresere

BY WATI TALEBULA

A student from the Solomon Islands has described his acceptance at the Fiji National University’s Pacific Centre for Maritime Studies as a significant step toward achieving his goals.

John Patterson Lema, who hails from Temotu Province at the eastern tip of the Solomon Islands, is currently enrolled in the Diploma in Marine Engineering Level 5 programme.

Mr. Lema said his interest in engineering began during his childhood in a rural community, where he developed a curiosity about the rapid changes brought by modern technology.

“In 2023, I enrolled at the University of the South Pacific to study a Bachelor of Electrical and Electronic Engineering back home, but due to financial challenges, I had to look for other options,” he said.

He later secured a scholarship through Pacific Towing Company Limited, a maritime service provider operating in the Solomon Islands under Steamships Company Limited’s logistics operations in Papua New Guinea.

The scholarship enabled him to pursue maritime studies at FNU.

“On my first arrival, I was welcomed by friendly staff and students, which gave me confidence that I would complete my studies successfully,” he said.

He acknowledged that a maritime career can be both physically and mentally demanding, particularly due to long periods at sea and time away from family.

“You must remain mentally strong and positive, especially when dealing with stress onboard vessels,” he said. Adjusting to a new learning environment

in Fiji also presented challenges, including adapting to academic schedules and a different cultural setting. However, he said support from fellow students and staff helped him settle in.

“Over time, I became more comfortable, and learning became more enjoyable,” he said.

Looking ahead, Mr. Lema hopes to contribute to the maritime industry in his home country after completing his studies.

“I want to use the skills and knowledge I gain here to support the local maritime sector and create opportunities for future seafarers,” he said.

He added that while the maritime profession comes with risks, it is also rewarding and helps build discipline and resilience.

Mr. Lema aims to become a qualified Officer of the Watch within the next five years and eventually progress toward Class 1 Engineering Master certification.

He credited his training at PCMS for equipping him with the practical skills and confidence needed for a career at sea.

“FNU is helping me build a strong foundation for my future in the maritime industry,” he said.

Mr. Lema also highlighted the cultural experience of studying in Fiji, noting that it has broadened his perspective.

“Back in the Solomon Islands, I interacted with Fijians online. Now I can meet people in person and say ‘Bula’ here in Suva,” he said.

He described his time in Fiji as positive, noting that people are friendly and approachable.



Manager for National Productivity and Industry Innovation Sonia Shivangani
Photo Credit: Supplied.

Meet FNU's first Female Manager for National Productivity and Industry Innovation

For Shivangani, stepping into the role represents both pride and purpose.

These experiences have shaped her collaborative leadership approach.

“It is both an honour and a responsibility,” Shivangani shared. “Personally, it reflects a journey of commitment to education, leadership and contributing to meaningful change. Professionally, it represents the confidence the University has placed in me to strengthen FNU’s engagement with industry, productivity initiatives and innovation.”

“I value teamwork, open dialogue and practical solutions. Strong leadership is about empowering others and creating an environment where ideas and innovation can thrive.”

While being the first woman in the position is significant, Shivangani believes the milestone carries a broader meaning.

Through the Office of National Productivity and Industry Innovation, Shivangani is helping strengthen partnerships between FNU, industry stakeholders and national development priorities. By aligning academic programmes with evolving workforce needs, the office also supports meaningful opportunities for students to gain industry exposure.

“This is not just about being the first woman in the role, but about opening doors for many more women to lead, innovate and shape the future.”

On International Women’s Day, Shivangani encourages young women and female students at FNU to pursue their ambitions with confidence.

Her leadership journey has been guided by resilience, adaptability and continuous learning. Moving from an academic leadership role into a strategic portfolio focused on national productivity and industry engagement required new perspectives and strong stakeholder relationships.

“Believe in your ability to lead, innovate and create change. Your ideas and determination have the power to shape industries, communities and the future of our nation.”

BY CHRISTAL KAPOOR

As the Fiji National University joins the global community in commemorating International Women’s Day, the achievements of women shaping leadership and innovation continue to inspire the University community.

Among them is Sonia Shivangani, FNU’s first female Manager for National Productivity and Industry Innovation, whose appointment marks an important milestone for the institution.

“Women Carry Power to Change History” – VC Nabobo-Baba

BY CHRISTAL KAPOOR

As the global community observes International Women’s Day and Women’s History Month, the Fiji National University (FNU) is reaffirming its commitment to advancing gender equality through education, leadership and national development.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba highlighted the transformative power of women in society and the importance of creating spaces where their voices and talents are fully recognised.

“Anything against women will not stand for long, because God made us too. We may be a minority, we may be underprivileged, but we carry the power to change history,” she said.

Professor Nabobo-Baba emphasised that the message of International Women’s Day is not simply symbolic, but a call to recognise the strength, resilience and intelligence that women contribute to families, communities and nations. “This is more than a statement; it is a declaration of

faith, dignity and strength. It speaks to every woman who has faced barriers, every girl who has been told she is not enough, and every mother who has sacrificed so the next generation can rise higher.”

She noted that women’s participation in leadership and decision-making is essential to achieving Fiji’s national aspirations.

“Empowering women through education directly supports the country’s National Development Plan, which emphasises inclusive growth, innovation and equal opportunities for all citizens.”

“At FNU, this vision is also embedded within the University’s Strategic Plan, which prioritises accessible education, research excellence and the development of skilled graduates who contribute to national progress,” said Professor Nabobo-Baba.

Recent milestones across the University reflect this commitment. FNU has celebrated three female PhD

graduates just last year, who are advancing research and knowledge in their respective fields, while vocational education continues to empower women across communities. At the recent Naiyaca RRMTVET graduation, one of the most inspiring moments was the recognition of the programme’s oldest graduate, eighty-two year-old Losana Dio, demonstrating that education has no age limit.

Professor Nabobo-Baba encouraged young women across Fiji to pursue education with confidence.

“Women are not secondary in society. We are leaders, nurturers, thinkers and changemakers. When given space and opportunity, women transform families, communities and nations.”

Her message to young women who may still hesitate to pursue education was clear: believe in your potential, because education remains one of the most powerful tools for empowerment and change.



Losana Dio
Photo Credit: Romeka Kumari



Dr Kasanita Nayasi
Photo Credit: Luke Salababa



Dr Jazbeen Ali
Photo Credit: Penioni Kolinisau



Dr Feriyal Bano
Photo Credit: Luke Salababa



Dr Deepti Devi
Photo Credit: Penioni Kolinisau

Following His Dream Into Plumbing



Ratu Kinisela Matadru with a Certificate in Household and Sanitary Plumbing.
Photo credit: Romeka Kumari

BY ROMEKA KUMARI

It is never too late to follow your dreams.”

At just 26, Ratu Kinisela Matadru made a decision that would reshape his future.

While pursuing a cookery course, he chose to pause his studies and follow a long-held ambition in plumbing — a move that required courage, conviction and a willingness to start afresh.

That decision has now paid off. Ratu graduated with a Certificate in Household and Sanitary Plumbing under the Community Based Non-Formal Education programme at the FNU Naiyaca Campus in Labasa, marking a significant milestone in his journey.

“I always liked plumbing, but I was initially studying cookery,” Ratu explained.

“I realised my true interest and decided to follow my dream.”

Switching paths was not without its challenges. Leaving behind a course he had already begun meant stepping into unfamiliar territory. Yet for Ratu,

the clarity of purpose outweighed the uncertainty.

“I have learnt how to install, repair, and maintain plumbing systems properly,” he said.

“It feels great to have hands-on skills that I can use in real life.”

Ratu described the journey as both demanding and fulfilling — a reminder that worthwhile goals often require resilience.

“It was not easy leaving cookery, but I knew this is what I wanted,” he admitted.

“Completing the course gives me confidence to start looking for work and build a career in plumbing.”

“With this certificate, I am looking to build a stable career in the trade sector. I hope to encourage other young Fijianhs to honestly reflect on their passions and not fear changing direction when necessary.”

His message is simple yet powerful: “if a path does not feel right, it is never too late to choose another.”

Brothers Prove It's Never Too Late



Brothers, Pauliasi Sigataqa and Isei Vosadrau with their Certificate in Basic Cabinet Making and Joinery. Photo credit: Romeka Kumari

BY ROMEKA KUMARI

It was a milestone achievement for brothers Pauliasi Sigataqa and Isei Vosadrau when they proudly walked side by side to receive their Certificates in Basic Cabinet Making and Joinery.

The pair, lifelong farmers from Wasavulu village, were among the 365 people in a two-week course delivered under the Regional and Rural Maritime Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme.

The training was conducted by the National Training and Productivity Centre at Fiji National University’s Nayaka Campus in Labasa last month.

At 75, Sigataqa described the occasion as one of immense pride and gratitude having spent his entire life farming to support his family as education had once seemed like a distant dream.

“I’m really thankful to FNU and NTPC for the course and also, it felt a proud moment to walk down the graduation isle at this age to pick my certificate,” Sigataqa said.

“I never saw age as a barrier to education and when I first heard about this course, I was really excited to learn new skill that would help me and my family.”

“Whenever the cabinets or couch used to get damaged at home, I had to hire professionals to repair and sometimes I ended up spending money to buy new one but this no longer remains an issue now with the knowledge and skills I gained in the two weeks.”

His younger brother, 60-year-old Vosadrau, also sees the qualification as a turning point. While he remains passionate about farming, the course has sparked a new sense of purpose and possibility.

“I have always loved being a farming and enjoyed farming but now, this education has given a business idea to me and that is to make coffins,” Vosadrau shared.

“In Labasa, I have seen there is lack of coffins available during funeral arrangements. The demand for coffin is a lot, and the coffin makers are less which is why coffins are very expensive.”

“I feel that this skill is more than carpentry — it is an opportunity to serve my community members during their most difficult moments, while also creating an additional source of income for my family.”

A Proud Moment at Sixty-Four



Nanise Watiqalo shares her excitement.
Photo Credit: Romeka Kumari

BY ROMEKA KUMARI

At 64, when many believe their classroom days are firmly behind them, Nanise Watiqalo chose to begin a new chapter.

The housewife from Nasekula in Labasa graduated with a Certificate in Basic Cookery after completing a two-week course under the Regional and Rural Maritime TVET (RRMTVET) programme delivered by the Fiji National University’s National Training and Productivity Centre at the Naiyaca Campus.

For Watiqalo, walking up to receive her first-ever formal qualification was more than a ceremony. It was a quiet victory, a recognition of a lifetime spent behind the stove, cooking for her family, church gatherings and village functions.

“I have been cooking all my life for my children, my husband, for church gatherings and village functions. But today, I feel like my cooking has been given a certificate. It makes me very proud,” she said.

Though confident in the kitchen, stepping into a structured learning environment after decades was not without doubt.

“At first, I was nervous. I thought maybe I am too old to learn new things. But when I started, I realised learning has no age. The teachers were very patient, and I enjoyed every day,” she revealed.

What had once been guided by instinct and experience was now supported by technical knowledge and professional standards.

“I learnt new cooking techniques, new baking styles and more about pastry. Before, I would just cook from experience and feeling. Now I understand why we do certain things in a certain way. It has improved my confidence,” she said.

For Watiqalo, the greatest transformation was not just in skill, but in self-belief. Sitting in a classroom alongside other learners reminded her that growth does not come with an expiry date.

“I feel encouraged. If I can do this at 64, then other women my age can also try. We should not think that learning is only for the young.”

Watiqalo hopes her journey will encourage other women, particularly those in rural communities, to embrace opportunities for training and skills development when they arise.

“Cooking is my passion. Now I have the knowledge to make it even better. This certificate means everything to me.”

Bond Strengthened Through Shared Baking Journey



Mother-in-law Ana Vakacoa and daughter-in-law Hannah Narisa Gauna.
Photo Credit: Romeka Kumari

BY ROMEKA KUMARI

It was a graduation filled with pride and emotion at the Fiji National University's Naiyaca Campus in Labasa, as a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law celebrated earning their Certificate in Baking and Patisserie together under the Community Based Non-Formal Education (CBNFE) programme.

For 67-year-old Ana Vakacoa, the milestone marked the fulfilment of a lifelong passion. Known among her family for her home-baked treats, Ana had always loved working with flour and sugar, yet never had the opportunity to pursue formal training.

"I have always enjoyed baking at home," Ana said warmly.

"But I did not have enough education to learn how to make different types of pastries properly. I would just follow what I knew."

For years, her recipes were guided by instinct and tradition rather than technical knowledge. Still, the desire to refine her craft never faded.

"The moment I learnt about the course, I couldn't hold myself back. I told myself; this is my chance to learn more."

Standing proudly beside her at the ceremony was her daughter-in-law, Hannah Narisa Gauna, whose journey through the programme became equally transformative.

"I was thrilled when I found out about this course. It has opened a new pathway for me. We have learnt professional techniques, new recipes and how to present our baked goods beautifully," Hannah said.

What began as an educational opportunity soon became something deeper — a shared experience that strengthened family ties. Long hours of measuring, mixing and perfecting pastries turned into moments of laughter, encouragement and mutual support.

"It was really special to learn a new trade together. We encouraged each other every day," Hannah.

"For me, the course offered fresh direction and confidence. Our goal is to start a baking business that will support our family and turn our passion into profit."

"We want to build something together and this is just the beginning for us."

Blooming Confidence Through Lifelong Learning



Lalita Devi during the graduation at Naiyaca Campus.
Photo Credit: Penioni Kolinisau

BY ROMEKA KUMARI

For many years, Lalita Devi would sit quietly in her church, admiring the intricate floral arrangements that adorned the altar during Sunday services and special celebrations. She often marvelled at the creativity and skill of the women who carefully prepared each display, never imagining that one day she would stand among them.

Today, the 53-year-old from Bulileka in Labasa carries not only new knowledge but also a renewed sense of confidence after earning a Certificate in Floriculture through the Regional and Rural Maritime TVET programme.

The course was organised by the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) at Fiji National University's Naiyaca Campus in Labasa last month.

For Lalita, the certificate represents far more than the completion of a short course it marks the achievement of her very first formal qualification.

"I used to see the women at church doing beautiful flower arrangements. I would think to myself, I wish I could do that too. Now I have the knowledge and the courage to arrange flowers on my own," Lalita shared.

She admitted that for many years she doubted her own ability.

"I always thought arranging flowers was a special talent that only certain people had," she said softly.

"I did not realise that it is something you can learn, practise and improve."

Throughout the training, she discovered that floristry is both an art and a science. From understanding colour combinations to balancing shapes, textures and sizes, she began to appreciate the careful thought behind every arrangement.

"When I learnt about colour harmony and how different flowers complement each other, it was like seeing flowers in a completely new way," she explained. "Now, when I look at an arrangement, I understand why it's captivating."

The experience also transformed her confidence.

"This is my first certificate," she shared proudly. "I never had the chance to gain formal qualifications before, so this means a lot to me."

She described the moment she received her certificate as emotional and empowering.

"I felt proud of myself. It reminded me that learning does not stop when you get older. We can still grow, just like the flowers we arrange," she said.

Beyond personal achievement, Lalita hopes to use her new skills to serve her church and wider community.

"I am no longer afraid to volunteer. Now I know what I am doing, and I am proud of what I can create," she added. "The next time there is a church event, I will not sit at the back wishing I could help. I will step forward."

A Shared Dream Across Generations



daughter, Telesia Savelina Pahulu with her mother, Fiona he lotu Mahe Pahulu.
Photo credit: Luke Salababa

BY ROMEKA KUMARI

In a moving testament to courage, sacrifice and the enduring bond between mother and daughter, two women from Tonga are walking the same university corridors in pursuit of their dreams.

At the Fiji National University's College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, 47-year-old Fiona He Lotu Mahe Pahulu and her 19-year-old daughter, Telesia Savelina Pahulu, are not only studying under the same college, they are inspiring one another every step of the way.

Fiona, a mother of four, is in her final year of a Bachelor of Health Promotion. Her daughter Telesia has just begun her journey as a first-year student pursuing a Bachelor of Dietetics and Nutrition.

"It's interesting to study together and getting to learn more about the different course we are pursuing under the same College," mother, Fiona said.

"The sad reality is that this is the only year I get to study with my daughter but we are already making memories together."

For Fiona, the journey has demanded immense strength. Having served as a health promotion officer in Tonga, she made the life-changing decision to move to Fiji in 2024 to further her education while Telesia was still in Year 12.

"As a mother, the journey has been tough, but I keep reminding myself that I am getting a degree for my children and husband who look up to me," she said.

"I have so far loved the facility at CMNHS because we don't have such big labs back in our country and I have learnt more about health promotion through the hands on experience in my courses."

For Telesia, her calling was shaped by the health challenges she witnessed growing up in Tonga.

"Back home, not many people chose to pursue this course and that's why our people are finding difficulty in fighting Non-Communicable Diseases," Telesia shared.

"I want to return home and apply my knowledge in educating my people about diet and nutritional health."

The 19-year-old said studying alongside her mother has made the transition to university life less daunting and far more meaningful.

"She has been my guide since day one. She toured me around the Campus and also she is a great support system. This is my first year in university and looking for my class was a bit of challenge but mum helped me!"

Holi & International Women's Day Celebration @ FNU



The women of the Fiji National University's Natabua Campus were celebrated in honour of International Women's Day, recognising their contributions and the important role they play



Celebrating the incredible women behind our Divisions of Finance in honour of International Women's Day and the vibrant spirit of Holi.



Fiji National University Naiyaca Campus came alive with vibrant energy as staff and students gathered to celebrate the joyful Festival of Colours, Holi.



Our students sing Faag to celebrate Holi at the Naiyaca Campus Bure in Labasa.



The FNU Bonunaqwele Campus celebrated the women of the campus in honour of International Women's Day.



FNU's Division of Marketing and Communications celebrate Holi and International Women's Day at Nasinu Campus.



Colours, laughter and togetherness filled the campus as staff and students from the CETVET at the Fiji National University Holi celebration.



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FNU and Fiji Fashion Week Strengthen Partnership



2026 FFW Central Student Briefing
Photo Credit: Supplied

BY CHRISTAL KAPOOR

The Fiji National University (FNU) has once again partnered with Fiji Fashion Week (FJFW) to host its annual student briefing sessions, reinforcing a collaboration that has supported the growth of Fiji's creative industries for nearly two decades.

According to Taniela Matanimeke, Designer Relations Manager and Events Assistant at Fiji Fashion Week, FNU was a natural choice for the sessions. "For over 18 years, FNU has consistently supported our initiatives, particularly in promoting fashion education and nurturing young creative talent," Matanimeke said.

Each year, two briefing sessions are held to guide schools participating in the Student Designer Show Competition. The Central Division session typically takes place at FNU's Nabua Campus, while the Western Division session is usually hosted at the Bonunaqwele (Namaka) Campus in Nadi.

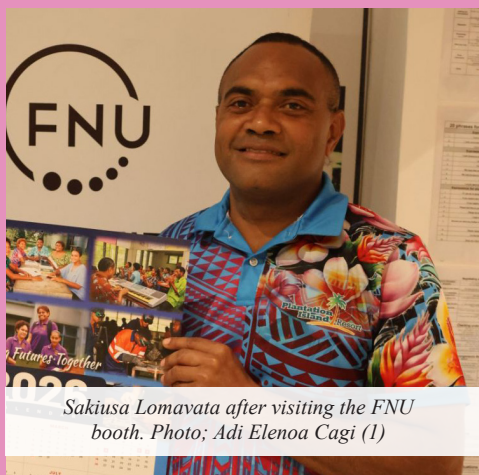
This year, the Western session was successfully conducted at the Naceva Campus in Lautoka. Each session attracts around 50 to 60 participants, including teachers and students from approximately 12 to 15 schools, and runs for one to two hours.

Matanimeke highlighted the importance of these sessions, noting that they provide clear guidance on competition requirements, timelines, and expectations. "They also allow us to engage directly with participants, answer questions, and ensure students feel confident and well prepared to present their collections on a professional platform," he said.

He described the experience of using FNU facilities as excellent, commending the university's professionalism and well-equipped learning environments that foster engagement and creativity.

Looking ahead, Fiji Fashion Week envisions deeper collaboration with FNU, including developing structured fashion education pathways from certificate to degree level. Matanimeke added that such partnerships are crucial in bridging education and industry, helping young designers gain practical exposure and build sustainable careers in Fiji's growing fashion sector.

FNU Contributes Positively to Resort's Employee Service Week



Sakiusa Lomavata after visiting the FNU booth. Photo: Adi Elenoa Cagi (1)

BY NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

The Fiji National University (FNU) was grateful to be part of the Employee Service Week for Plantation Island Resort that took place earlier this month.

The event allowed all staff to educate

themselves more about the programmes and services the FNU offers and how they could also work on professional growth while being employed.

The FNU was among about seven stakeholders that took part in this one-day event.

Employees from nearby resorts like, Lomani Island Resort and Spa and Musket Cove Island Resort and Marina also took time to visit the booths.

Group Manager – People and Culture, Ms Vineeta Sharma shared that the special event was designed to celebrate and support the resort's team members while strengthening the relationships that made the workplace community thrive.

"Throughout the day and evening, the employees had the opportunity to connect with stakeholders as we brought together a range of services and activities that promoted wellbeing, professional growth, and collaboration," said Ms Sharma.

"It provided a great opportunity for staff to engage directly

with the resort's partners and stakeholders, learning more about the services available to them, and to build stronger connections beyond the workplace."

Plantation Island Resort employee, Sakiusa Lomavata who serves as the Barman on the island said FNU's visit was an opportune time for all the staff.

The Lauan native from Matuku Island has been working in the industry for more than 10 years, recently joining Plantation Island Resort in April last year.

"I was inspired to become a Barman because I enjoyed working with alcohol and designing all sort of beverages realising that it puts a smile on the faces of people," he said.

"This job has also allowed me to hear people's stories and make lasting friendships with our visitors from across the world."

Mr Lomavata showed interest in pursuing the programme – Bar Management and Basic Food and Beverage Supervision with the FNU's National Training and Productivity Centre.

Church College Students Inspired by FNU's Diverse Study Pathways



Church College students explore future pathways with FNU at the year's first school outreach session. Photo Credit : Roshel Singh

BY NAVINESH KUMAR

The first school outreach awareness session for the year by the Fiji National University (FNU) has already made a meaningful impact beginning at Church College of Fiji.

The FNU Outreach Team visited the school to engage with Year 12 and 13 students, providing detailed information about the University's diverse range of programmes, from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) certificates and diplomas to undergraduate degree pathways. The session focused on helping students

better understand entry requirements, scholarship opportunities, flexible learning options, and the comprehensive student support services available at FNU.

For many students, the session was more than just a presentation, it was a moment of clarity about their future.

Sabrina Bidesi, a Year 13 student, described the awareness session as eye-opening.

"The presentation helped me understand what I can study after Year 13 and how FNU can support my career goals. I didn't realise there were so many options available locally," she shared. Sabrina said the interactive question-and-answer segment allowed her and her peers to gain practical insights into campus life and industry training opportunities.

Similarly, fellow Year 13 student Harold Qio said the session gave him greater confidence about his next steps.

"Now I feel more confident about making decisions for my future. I learned that there are many pathways available, whether through TVET or degree programmes, and that FNU provides practical training that prepares us for real jobs," he said.

The outreach initiative reflects FNU's commitment as a dual-sector university to ensure secondary school students across Fiji are well-informed about their higher education and skills training opportunities.

FNU's Acting Director Marketing and Communications, Ella Bennion, emphasised the importance of early engagement with students.

"Outreach awareness sessions are vital in empowering students with accurate and timely information about their study and career pathways. At FNU, we are committed to ensuring that every student understands the opportunities available to them whether they choose a vocational qualification or an academic degree. Our goal is to help them make informed decisions that align with their aspirations and the needs of national development," she said.

As the first school outreach awareness session of the year, the visit to Church College of Fiji sets a positive tone for the months ahead. The FNU Outreach Team looks forward to connecting with more schools nationwide, continuing to inspire and guide students as they prepare for life beyond secondary education.

Through conversations, shared experiences, and informed guidance, FNU remains dedicated to shaping futures, one school visit at a time.



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Health & Hustle

Joy Kami's Journey



Joy Genevieve Nanise Kami
Photo Courtesy: Supplied

BY WATI TALEBULA

Meet Joy Genevieve Nanise Kami, a 22-year-old fourth-year student pursuing a Bachelor of Physiotherapy at Fiji National University (FNU). Fully Tongan by heritage but raised in Fiji for the past 18 years, Joy is passionate about helping people regain movement, confidence, and quality of life.

As she approaches the final stage of her academic journey, she is driven by a strong desire to use physiotherapy to serve communities across the Pacific. Joy's inspiration to pursue physiotherapy began during her childhood, when she witnessed the importance of physical care during illness. These early experiences sparked her interest in healthcare and the role it plays in improving people's lives. Her involvement with the WOWS Foundation, which supports children living with cancer, further strengthened her commitment to helping others during some of their most challenging moments.

DISCOVERING PHYSIOTHERAPY

A defining moment in her journey came when she was 16 years old and had just begun competing in Olympic weightlifting. After sustaining her first injury, her coaches advised her to visit a physiotherapist. That experience introduced her to the profession and left a lasting impression. "That was my first encounter with the profession," Joy recalls. "I met Letitia Erasito during that appointment, and I was amazed by her treatment." Learning more about physiotherapy and the commitment required to become a practitioner helped her realise that the profession aligned perfectly with her interests. "Knowing my love for sports and helping people, I realised this was the path I wanted to pursue," she says. Another person who influenced her decision was Isaiah Elder, who at the time was a physiotherapy Observing his

skills within the sports environment inspired Joy and reinforced her desire to follow the same career path.

CHOOSING FNU

Joy's decision to study at Fiji National University was also shaped by the welcoming community she observed among students, particularly those from the Pacific. "I grew up knowing many of the Tongan students who studied at FNU, and the community was so welcoming," she says. She was also drawn to the cultural diversity she witnessed through university events and student activities. "I admired the medical students and the diversity I saw during cultural nights. It felt like an environment worth experiencing."

LIFE AS A PHYSIOTHERAPY STUDENT

For Joy, studying physiotherapy has been both exciting and challenging. She explains that the programme requires dedication and discipline, but it is also deeply rewarding. "Honestly, it is so much fun for me," she says. "The skills learned in physiotherapy apply in almost all environments, and it has changed my perspective on healthcare." Her current courses include Physiotherapy in Special Populations, Research Methods, Physiotherapy Practicum, and Professional Practice. Among these, physiotherapy practicum stands out as her favourite. "I enjoy physiotherapy practicum the most because I can apply all my learning to the patients who need it the most," she explains.

FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNITY

University life has also introduced Joy to a strong sense of community among fellow medical students. She values the friendships she has formed during her studies and believes these connections play an important role in navigating the challenges of the programme. "The friendships that develop on campus are truly special," she says. "We form beautiful bonds and support each other through the challenges of our studies and clinical attachments." Transitioning from high school to university also required Joy to adapt to a greater level of independence. She explains that university demands strong time management and self-discipline. "University study relies on our own discipline," she says. "It's up to us to manage our time effectively and build consistency in our studies."

UNDERSTANDING PHYSIOTHERAPY

Through her academic journey, Joy has discovered that physiotherapy is far broader and more complex than she initially imagined. "Before starting the programme, I thought physiotherapy was mostly sports-based and focused on rehabilitation," she says. "But I've come to realise that it plays a much bigger role in healthcare." Physiotherapists, she explains, support patients across a wide range of medical conditions and hospital units, helping individuals regain mobility and improve their overall quality of life. "Movement is fundamental to life, and everyone deserves the quality of living that comes with it," she says.

LOOKING AHEAD

As she prepares to enter the profession, Joy hopes to continue developing qualities she believes are essential for a successful healthcare practitioner. Patience, she says, is vital when working with patients and collaborating with other healthcare professionals. "Patience brings trust, understanding, and collaboration," she explains. She also believes humility is key to professional growth. "Humility allows me to accept critique and advice, which are necessary to provide safe and effective care," Joy says. Looking ahead, Joy hopes to specialise in musculoskeletal and neuromuscular physiotherapy while also exploring areas such as women's health, paediatrics, and geriatric care. She is particularly passionate about improving access to healthcare services for underserved communities. "I would love to provide free care in rural communities, especially for children, women, and the elderly," she says. Her long-term plan is to return to Tonga after graduation to better understand the country's healthcare system and contribute to its development.

RESILIENCE AND GROWTH

Like many students in demanding programmes, Joy has faced challenges along the way, including academic setbacks that at times affected her confidence. However, she has learned to view these experiences as opportunities for growth. "Every failure carries an opportunity for improvement," she reflects. By focusing on her strengths and embracing feedback, she has developed resilience and a stronger mindset. As she approaches graduation, Joy remains motivated by the impact physiotherapy can have on people's lives. "Physiotherapy is not only life-changing for patients," she says, "but for me as well."



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INSIDE FNU is a monthly newspaper which aims to promote the University's activities to the wider community.

This newsletter is produced by the Public Relations and Communications team at the Division of Marketing and Communications.

Publisher: Fiji National University
Editor: Manager Public Relations and Communications, Navinesh Kumar
Design & Layout: Roshel Singh
Division Head: Acting Director Marketing and Communications, Ella Bennion
Writers: Romeka Kumari, Wati Talebula, Nicolette Chambers, Christal Kapoor

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